

TOWN OF LOS ALTOS HILLS

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Site Development Review Process

The Town of Los Altos Hills is committed to maintaining a community in which its residents enjoy a high quality of life, a healthy environment, and the freedom to develop individual lifestyles in harmony with their neighbors. To these ends, procedures have been established over many years to assist residents in the development and improvement of their properties.

Most projects proceed with little difficulty, and Los Altos Hills has maintained a policy of having no formal “architectural review” in order to encourage a diversity of building styles and individual expression. However, certain problems may arise in which projects are denied because they do not conform to the purposes of the ordinances. In these cases, applicants may appeal Planning Commission decisions to the City Council. Alternately, the City Council reviews all projects approved through the Fast Track process and the Planning Commission and may overturn a previous decision within a limited period of time.

Notices are sent to surrounding homes when a major change to a property is being proposed so that all residents are given an opportunity to be heard and express their concerns. Notices are also posted on developing properties so that distant neighbors are aware of potential projects. Special consideration during the development process is given to protection of views, creeks and watersheds, natural vegetation, ridgelines and hilltops, scenic corridors, open space and pathways.

Landscape mitigation of new development is especially important to the Town. Significant participation by the public often accompanies development review, and neighbors are encouraged to work together to resolve issues of concern.

Step 1: Getting Started

Residents and their project representatives should familiarize themselves with the Town Zoning and Site Development Code and policies. The documents are available on our website or at Town Hall. We also suggest that residents and/or their project representatives make an appointment to consult with the Planning and Engineering staff in regards to potential development requirements and issues.

Step 2: Pre-Application Conference

Prior to submitting a formal application, it is recommended that a Town planner preliminarily review your project plans. Based on the information presented to the planner, a checklist of required items needed for application submittal will be completed. At this meeting, you will also receive a Site Development Application form and handouts to aid you in the process of preparing the submittal requirements and project plans.

Step 3: Formal Submittal of Application Materials

Submit your application materials and fees with a check payable to the Town of Los Altos Hills. Allow 30 days for the initial application review. Your assigned planner will meet with you or your architect to discuss the project review comments from the various departments and consultants.

Step 4: Administrative and Fast Track or Planning Commission

If the submitted project falls within the scope of the administrative level of review and once the project is deemed “complete” (conforming to the Zoning and Site Development Ordinances and policies), the assigned planner will prepare conditions of approval, which are mailed to the applicant with a stamped “Approved” set of plans.

In the case of projects that require a public hearing, a hearing notice and or staff report will be mailed to all property owners within 500 feet of the project property ten days prior to the hearing. The Planning Commission or Planning Director will conduct a public hearing for the project. The applicant or project representative should be present to answer questions from any interested member of the public. If there is no substantive neighbor opposition, the project will be approved at the hearing. Final conditions of approval are mailed to the applicant with a stamped “Approved” set of plans.

Sometimes projects are appealed. Any person may appeal the decision of the Site Development Committee and/or Planning Director to the Planning Commission by submitting an appeal letter and fee to the City Clerk. The appeal process is referenced in the Site Development Code of the Municipal Code.

Step 5: Submit for Building Permits

For each project, the assigned planner will prepare a list of conditions of approval, with certain conditions that must be satisfied prior to submitting plans for building permit plan check. Once the conditions of approval have been reviewed and approved by the corresponding department and the appeal period has expired, construction plans may be submitted to the Building Department.

Please contact the Building Technician or Inspector the requirements for building permit issuance anytime during the planning review. Building and planning personnel are located in the same location for your convenience.

SITE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW MATRIX

ORDINANCE NO. 384 (ADOPTED SEPTEMBER 1996)

PROJECT TYPE	ADMINISTRATIVE	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE *	PLANNING COMMISSION * OR FAST TRACK *
DEVELOPMENT AREA (INCLUDES TOTAL AREA OF WORK)	Less than 3,000 square feet	3,000-7,500 square feet	Greater than 7,500 square feet
FLOOR AREA (INCLUDES TOTAL AREA OF WORK FOR REMODELS)	Less than 900 square feet OR Less than 250 sq. ft. > 19 ft. tall	900-1,500 square feet OR 250-500 sq. ft. > 19 ft. tall	Greater than 1,500 sq. ft./2nd story; OR Greater than 500 sq. ft. > 19 ft. tall
DEMOLITION	With Building Permit	N/A	N/A
DRIVEWAYS	All driveway modifications	New/relocated access	With review of new residence
EXTERIOR LIGHTING	Administrative Approval	With project review	With project review
FENCING/ENTRY GATE/COLUMNS	6 ft. height based on distance from right of way/openness of material	N/A	N/A
GRADING	Less than 250 cubic yards with adherence to Grading Policy	250-1,000 cubic yards with adherence to Grading Policy	Greater than 1,000 cubic yards; Exception to Grading Policy
LANDSCAPE SCREENING PLAN	N/A	Screening Planting Plan	Screening Planting Plan
NEW RESIDENCE	N/A	N/A	All new residences
SECONDARY DWELLING UNIT	Project must conform to all applicable ordinances and policies	N/A	N/A
RECREATIONAL	Spas; Replacement of pool	Tennis Courts and Pools	Greater than 7,500 square feet

* Requires the installation of story poles and netting prior to the mailing of a public hearing notice; a 10-23 day appeal period, depending on level of review.